

SLEEPWORKING

At Goodstone Aircraft Company,
the ultra-slow turning of the machine cutters
and dials
and the dropping of chips from the sliced metal surfaces
of bomber parts,
becomes hypnotic,
and everywhere machinists are nodding,
mouths falling open, heads jerking back,
as they snort and snore.

But over the years they have learned
how to keep themselves propped up
against the leather of their swivel chairs
without falling out of them,
and somehow
they are able to wake up just as their machines' cuts
are ending. They walk to the drinking fountain
and sprinkle ice-cold water on their heads,
or stand before fans
lifting their T-shirts up to their armpits,
knowing just how much to wake themselves up
so that they can reset their machines
for the next cuts.
Then they wiggle their asses
back into the impressions they have carved into
the leather of their chairs,
and get some more sleep.

TOOL OF THE TRADE

The machinists used their rollaway toolboxes like billboards,
plastering them with stickers and photos and posters
advertising their families,
their hobbies,
their opinions.
They filled them with booze and cigars and girlie magazines.
Parking them between their machines and the office,
they hid from supervisors
behind them.
Placards on their lids
threatened anyone who touched the rollaways
with death.

These machinists took their work seriously.